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DR. FLEXNER'S CRITICS

In November last, at the meeting of The Classical Section of The New York State Teachers' Association (see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 11.56, 103-104), Mr. J. P. Behm, of the Central High School, Syracuse, then President of the Section, read a very interesting paper entitled "A Modern School": Dr. Abraham Flexner and his Critics.

Since there is not room to print the paper in its entirety in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY*, it seems advisable to call attention to it here in these editorial columns. It is hoped that the paper may be published in full in the organ of The New York State Teachers' Association, known as *The Journal*. Mr. Behm summarized and criticized in his own person the views set forth by Dr. Flexner in his pamphlet, *A Modern School*. In addition, he quoted extensively from reviews by others of Dr. Flexner's paper.

Mr. Behm referred first to a letter contributed by Professor William K. Prentice, of Princeton University, to *The Nation*, May 18, 1916 (102. 541-542). Professor Prentice, accepting "as fundamental" Dr. Flexner's "proposition that in an educational system suited to our time 'the curriculum would contain only what can be shown to serve a purpose'", maintained that we should "be consistent and agree that the burden of proof should rest on any new subject or method proposed, as well as upon those already in use", and he insisted that Dr. Flexner's paper is unable to stand the test of "a careful examination of its premises and its argument".

Mr. Behm next referred at length to the pamphlet by Mr. C. H. Forbes, *The Sham Argument against Latin*, already referred to in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 11.32. Pertinent parts of this pamphlet were incorporated in the Princeton volume, *The Value of the Classics*, discussed in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 11. 73-74. One of Mr. Forbes's main points against Dr. Flexner is that he misused statistics. Whether he did so intentionally or not is immaterial; he did misuse them, and so, in either case, he is so far discredited. Again, Mr. Forbes's investigation of the results of the examinations given by The College Entrance Examination Board shows that in those examinations Latin ranks higher than German, chemistry, drawing, music, English, and history, the very subjects Dr. Flexner would have taught in his Modern School. If, then, as Dr. Flexner argues, The College Entrance Examination Board examinations prove that Latin has been badly taught

and is therefore to be banished from our Schools, there is no room for Dr. Flexner's own Modern School! The subjects he champions should themselves be discarded.

Mr. Behm next referred to a letter by Professor H. Rushton Fairclough, in *The Nation*, June 29, 1916 (102. 705). Assuming for the sake of argument that comparatively few students of Latin make a good record on examination, what of it? asks Professor Fairclough. Are we to conclude that

the subject can be of no benefit to the majority and therefore should be eliminated? Is this not strange reasoning? Though few pupils become good musicians or good artists, does it do the rest no good to study music and art?

In the *Nation* for September 6, 1917 (105. 277-278), Dr. John Cotton Dana, librarian of the Newark Public Library, attacked Dr. Flexner vigorously. He maintained that Dr. Flexner asserts in effect that

Schoolmasters, that is, our whole public school force, have developed and are imposing on the young people of this country, without considering what they actually need, "formal work not in harmony with the modern spirit", and that they have done this in abject subjection to tradition.

This statement, says Dr. Dana, is wholly untrue; it ignores completely the efforts made, for many years, to study

the time arrangements for presenting to children these several things <the subjects of the school curriculum>—their sequence, when and how much of each, and the problem of method of presentation. . .

"The veriest tyro in the educational field knows better" than Dr. Flexner does, says Dr. Dana, that mere tradition does not rule in our Schools.

Dr. Dana's concluding paragraph runs as follows:

The fundamental weakness in all that Dr. Flexner has put forth on education lies in his failure to note the obvious. He assumes that the average child is a *tabula rasa* pure and simple when he comes to school, and that the tablets of his intellect and sensibilities are affected in and by the school and by it only. He wants the school to be "modern". But, Heaven save the mark! the child is already 'modern' when he comes to school; and out of school and every day and year of his school life he gets more 'modern' still. The curse of the 'education' which a child gets in his 80,000 waking hours before he is fifteen is that very 'modernity' with which Mr. Flexner wishes to anoint him, through a curriculum and a method which shall steep him in the life he daily lives.

Mr. Behm refers also to a very instructive paper, by H. G. Good, of Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio, in *School and Society* 3.825-827 (June 3, 1916). Two quotations from this article (page 827) follow:

Would it be ungracious to say that our author after more or less brusquely bowing out at the front door our old acquaintance Formal Discipline <so far as current Schools are concerned> has then surreptitiously readmitted him at the back <in connection with the "Modern School">? . . .

Will a child trained in that school "read for sheer fun" at any time "Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare" and the rest? May not the modernization of the curriculum go too far; and is it safe to assume that the past, even the remote past, has nothing further to teach us? Is there any evidence that pupils get more "orderly training" from realistic subjects than from the study of Latin; and is inability to read a Latin historical document conclusive evidence of the futility of "four years of Latin"?

To Professor Shorey's fine paper, *The Assault on Humanism* (*THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 11.48) Mr. Behm of course refers repeatedly.

Here, then, are several papers that deserve careful study by all who are interested in Dr. Flexner's views, and in the 'experiment' based thereon. I have thought all along that it is fortunate that this 'experiment' is being tried outside the Public School systems of the country; it seemed to me far more likely that, under such circumstances, the 'experiment' would be fully and freely criticized. Such has indeed been the case. Teachers within the Public School systems are much more likely to speak freely of Dr. Flexner's Modern School than, let us say, Public School teachers in a city where the Gary System is being tried are to speak, in adverse public discussion, at least, of that system.

C. K.

(*To be continued*)

THE REACTION OF SPAIN UPON ROME

(*Concluded from page 5*)

More important, perhaps, were the changes in the political life of Rome which may be traced to the acquisition of Spain. One of the most striking reversals in the political history of Rome was the substitution of Assembly for Senate control in matters of foreign policy and imperial administration. The underlying reason for this decline of Senatorial authority, namely, the inefficiency of that body and of its deputies in the provinces, has long been attributed to its actions in connection with the war against Jugurtha. In my opinion, the Jugurthan fiasco was the second act of this drama. The first act was staged in Spain during the Celtiberian war, 153-133 B. C.

This opinion was shared by Polybius, who continued his work from 168 B. C. to 146 B. C. in order to describe the evil uses to which Rome had turned her fortune. Calpurnius Piso places the beginnings of the downfall of Rome in the censorship of Marcus Messala and Caius

Cassius, 154 B. C. Florus⁶ says, with reference to the fall of Numantia,

Hactenus populus Romanus pulcher, egregius, pius, sanctus atque magnificus; reliqua saeculi ut grandia aequae, ita vel magis turbida et foeda, crescentibus cum ipsa magnitudine imperii vitiis.

It is true that many authors take 146 B. C. and the destruction of Carthage as the year and the event which marked the turning-point of Rome's imperial career. Among them might be mentioned Sallust, Velleius, Valerius Maximus, Orosius, and even Florus⁷, who apparently strove to be impartial by giving every possible date a hearing. The chief reason given for the choice of 146 is that a wholesome restraint upon the Roman people had been removed by the destruction of Carthage. This does not take into account the fact that the Celtiberian war was not ended until thirteen years after that date; nor is there any definite proof that the Romans looked upon Carthage as a possible military rival. The figs which Cato exhibited were not thought of as munitions for Punic catapults. They represented, rather, wealth, and wealth which Rome could not acquire save by annihilating the owners thereof. I am inclined to doubt the moral and wholesome effectiveness of fear, but, if fear were needed to keep the Romans in the straight and narrow path, to the revolting tribes in Spain and not to the Carthaginians must be given the credit for restraining the Romans. It was necessary to resort to conscription to fill the levies for Spanish service in 152. Desertion and a certain modest backwardness about enlisting are to be noted on other occasions. But the most striking testimony comes from Cicero, who writes (*De Officiis* 1.38):

Sic cum Celtiberis, cum Cimbris bellum ut cum inimicis gerebatur, uter esset, non uter imperaret, cum Latinis, Sabinis, Samnitibus, Poenis, Pyrrho de imperio dimicabatur.

Returning to my statement that the war in Spain demonstrated for the first time on a broad scale the inefficiency of the Senate, let me note first of all the military weaknesses there displayed. Our chief source of information concerning this conflict is Appian's account of the Spanish War. Modern critics have accepted his account only in so far as it gives a general picture of the events which he is describing. The inaccuracy of his details has been proved in many instances. Therefore I present the following statistics with a great deal of reservation, submitting them merely as indications of the general course of the war. Appian often describes a defeat with such statements as 'many were killed', 'most of them perished', 'Plautius was defeated with great slaughter'. According to the figures given by Appian, generally in round numbers, the total loss for the first thirteen years of the war is 45,000. There were ten defeats in general engage-

⁶Florus 1. 34.

⁷Sallust, *Cat.* 10; *Jug.* 41; *Hist.* 1. 11; Velleius 2. 1; Valerius Maximus 7.2.3; Orosius 5. 8. 2; Florus 1. 47. 2.